545 The wife who is living with her husband during this month is obliged to prepare for him all the necessities. She makes bread for him and serves him as her master, painting him red and combing his hair every day. If he needs to travel she accompanies him everywhere during his trip. Since the love for their wives is unequal, the visits are sometimes not so evenly regulated. The husbands let whole years elapse without living with some of their wives. But if the wife is the daughter of a captain, he is interested in his child and threatens his son-in-law that he will take back his daughter and give her to someone else. If the wife is deceived and seduced by the wiles and promise of a lover and if her sin, done secretly, is discovered by her husband, he sometimes forgives his wife but never the wife's lover. 584 They like to be as free to abandon their wives as they are to chose them, and this is the reason why they leave them whenever they please. The wives do not have the same right and need their husbands' consent. If a man marries a slave he has captured in war, she is included among his wives, but she always has her hair cut like that of a boy. Often when they have taken their pleasure they strike their captured women with a boutou—which is a kind of club and is their ordinary weapon—and by hitting them on the head send them to the next world as their only reward. Nevertheless, this is rather rare and we have seen several of them, especially old men, who tenderly loved their young slaves and the children of such, who enjoyed the same condition as the man's other children.

[69] 593 567

146 There is no doubt at all that the female animals in our islands have a shorter gestation period than in Europe. I have neither noticed nor heard that women are affected in this way. However, the women are capable of having children earlier and they stop bearing children later than European women. If one looks into the register of Guadeloupe he will find the name of an old Carib woman called Madame, who is one hundred years old, and she has a daughter who is five years old. I have seen the woman and child. Her age is only conjectural, yet it is certain that she could not have been less than eighty years old when she gave birth to the child.

The Reverend Jesuit Father Chemel let me know several facts in letters which he did me the honor of writing, and which prove what now follows: He told me that at the time he lived in the islands a

446 young French boy, a servant of Mr. de la Vallee, having abused an old Carib woman who was 80 years old, made her pregnant. It should be added that according to the opinion of the inhabitants who first lived in the islands she was more than 100 years old. This was confirmed by the age of the children who were themselves very old. In the island of Martinique the same boy married a 55 year old French woman who became pregnant frequently and had several children, although she has now been barren for the last 15 years.

4. Occupations

461 None of the occupations of the Carib men require difficult labor,
462 but are rather a necessity without which even the sweetest life is unbearable. They spend their whole life in such complete idleness that when one sees them put a hand to work one might think that it is monotony and annoyance which they find in laziness that makes them work, rather than reasonable compulsion. As soon as they get up they run to the river, wash themselves completely, and then light a big fire in their carbet, and sit around it to get warm. Everyone tells what he knows, some converse with friends, and others play the flute, so that they are moving either their tongues or their fingers. Meanwhile women prepare the food. After this meal some go fishing, which they do in several ways.

226 They shoot fish with arrows and dive down immediately into the
462 water to get them. Others, when they see a lobster, which is a big crayfish of the sea, take a big stone in both hands and dive headlong into the water. Leaving the stone at the bottom they bring up the lobster. They harpoon tortoises, but usually they fish for them with hook and line as we do. They catch big fish with lines made of aloes fiber, using big hooks. Small fish are caught on little tin hooks without barbs. They also use birds such as kingfishers and pelicans, which they tame while young, to go fishing for them. They use these birds as we use cormorants. Fairly often they stun fish in rivers with certain crushed herbs which have been soaked. They catch these stunned fish by hand, and indeed, these are just as good as those caught by hook and line.